

Discusses student legislation based on Katie's Law

Washington, DC – Last week, Harry Teague met with Carlsbad High School students Kaitlyn Frederick and Krista Marrs in Washington, where they were representing New Mexico as part of the American Legion Auxiliary's Girls Nation program. The program offers previous Girls State participants a hands-on federal government training session. Two representatives from each state are selected for a weeklong conference in the nation's capital to gain a special knowledge of how the system works.

The group discussed legislation that Frederick and Marrs introduced at Girls Nation inspired by Teague's national Katie's Law, a bill that encourages states to maximize the potential of forensic DNA to solve and prevent violent crimes by collecting a DNA sample upon arrest at the same time as fingerprints -- for certain felony crimes. Marrs and Frederick's bill was placed second on the Girls Nation docket based on how well-written it was and passed with a vote of 97-1.

"I commend Kaitlyn Frederick and Krista Marrs for the success of their bill and for their interest in learning how our government works. New Mexicans should be proud of Krista and Kaitlyn for drafting such a successful piece of legislation for Girls Nation," said Harry Teague said. "They represent our state's best and brightest."

Katie's Law is named after Katie Sepich, from Carlsbad, New Mexico. Katie was 22 years old when she was brutally raped and murdered in Las Cruces, New Mexico. If New Mexico had at that time required a DNA sample to be taken upon arrest, Katie's killer would have been caught

three months after the murder when the murderer was arrested for another predatory crime. Instead, the killer was released back onto the streets, it was three long years before he was finally apprehended again and linked to Katie's murder.

Frederick and Marrs have a personal connection to the law, sharing the same hometown as Katie Sepich and attending school with her younger sister.

"I went to the signing ceremony for Katie's Law and I remember how much that meant for our state," Marrs said. "The law is such a big deal for New Mexico, so we wanted to do our own version."

The students told Teague that they were humbled to represent New Mexico at Girls Nation in D.C.

"I've never been around so many girls who know what's going on around them in the world," Frederick said. "It's so refreshing."

The American Legion Auxiliary implements the Girls State and Girls Nation programs, which are intended for young women entering their senior year in high school with an interest in local, state and federal government. As a result of participation in these programs, these young women take responsibility for good citizenship and develop an understanding of government.



From left to right: Mary Lou Lopez of the American Legion Auxiliary, Carlsbad students Krista Marrs and Kaitlyn Frederick

discuss Katie's Law legislation with Harry Teague in Washington.

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